Unity in diversity: the religious, political, and cultural faces of Pancasila

Chutao Zhang

Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

chutao.zhang@mail.utoronto.ca

Abstract. Pancasila, the five core principles proclaimed at the founding of the modern Indonesian nation-state, has served as a unifying concept and the bedrock of Indonesians' shared nationhood. This paper traces the evolution of Pancasila as the enduring state ideology from its consolidation during the Soekarno era and sweeping expansion under the New Order regime to its decline and subsequent revival during and after the democratic transition. I argue that Pancasila is central to Indonesia's "unity in diversity." It emerged as what scholars aptly describe as an "empty signifier," an inclusive and all-encompassing ideological vehicle that leaves room for diverse and often competing interpretations. This interpretive flexibility allows religious, political, and cultural groups within Indonesian society to pursue distinct goals under the banner of Pancasila without deviating from or undermining the state's ideological unity. It facilitates the formation of imagined communities, through which divergent views and interests are represented, reconciled, and legitimized by the Pancasila state. The imagination is both singular and plural: while groups such as secular nationalists, conservative Muslims, New Order elites, democrats, and Javanists build solidarity within their respective, self-contained communities, they collectively submit to and willingly adhere to a unified and sovereign Indonesian nationhood in which different voices are acknowledged and accommodated.

Keywords: Pancasila, historical evolution, unity, diversity, imagined communities

1. Introduction

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, spanning nearly 20,000 islands across over 9.8 million square kilometres, is home to approximately 250 million people from over 300 ethnic groups and 250 distinct languages [1]. Despite being the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, Indonesia hosts a rich mosaic of faiths, including all major world religions, folk traditions, and indigenous animistic beliefs [2,3]. As a result, against the backdrop of national independence in 1945, building unity and a modern Indonesian nation-state amid the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity emerged as an imperative facing the founding fathers of Indonesia [4]. At the heart of this project of building "unity in diversity," lies the urgent need to formulate a sound playbook guiding the state-religion(s) relation and interaction [5].

The Muslim religious base of the newly independent Indonesia collided with the secular and nationalist tendencies of the Western-educated political elites, founding fathers, and the "solidarity makers" like Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta [6]. This ignited political debates between the religious and nationalist leaders on which course Indonesia should take in delineating the spheres of religion(s) and the state. Competing currents are evident in these debates where conservative Muslim leaders pushed for the Islamic idea of the "unification of state and religion" or the establishment of an Islamic state [4]. On the other hand, the nationalist camp led by Soekarno envisioned an Indonesian nation-state underpinned by secularism and the "separation of state and religion(s) [4]. It was within this context that Pancasila emerged as a compromising, artificial, and synthetic state ideology and balancing act to provide a flexible yet robust and resilient foundation on which "unity in diversity" could be materialized.

The term "Pancasila" derives from two Sanskrit words, panca (five) and sila (principles), referring to its five "inseparable and mutually qualifying" core tenets: belief in one almighty god, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom in unanimity arising from deliberation amongst representatives, and social justice for all the people of Indonesia [4,7].

As Bernard Boland aptly describes, Indonesia's religion-state interplay guided by Pancasila represents a middle way or a third model between the "secular Way of Türkiye" and the founding of an Islamic state, as in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia [8]. According to Moch Ichwan, the Indonesian Pancasila state is neither secular nor religious, in which the state avoids being captured by the dominant religion but by no means operates independently or in complete separation from religions [4]. Instead,

it maintains a delicate and ingenious balance, where a mild separation between the state and religion allows the state to moderate and administer religion in public spheres, while religious norms and values, in turn, inspire and engender changes in state governance [4]. In other words, Pancasila serves as both a unifying framework and a site of contestation in the interaction between state and religion. It plays a crucial role as a buffer that mitigates and hedges against radicalizing tendencies of both religious extremism and outright secularism [2].

Nevertheless, Pancasila's ingenuity extends beyond the religious sphere, as reflected and implied in the remaining four principles. As in Soeharto's call for implementing Pancasila as the "sole basis of the state" and all walks of Indonesian life, the state ideology plays an active role also in political and cultural spheres [9]. Pancasila's omnipresence, elasticity, and resilience are evident in its institutionalization through the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP), the mandatory Pancasila curricula, the integration with democratic values (Pancasila democracy), and its connection with and roots in the indigenous cultural tradition of Javanism.

1.1. Research questions

Given the multiplicity of Pancasila's mediating roles in the religious, civil, cultural, and political spheres, this paper seeks to answer the following questions. What role does Pancasila play in shaping Indonesia's state and identity formation, and in reconciling the divergent agendas and interests of its diverse cultural, political, and religious groups? How does Pancasila, as a compromising and synthetic state ideology, contribute to Indonesia's "unity in diversity"?

1.2. Arguments

This paper argues that Pancasila is central to Indonesia's success in achieving "unity in diversity." Contrary to Ichwan's claim that Pancasila is "neither secular nor religious," this paper contends that the state ideology is both secular and religious. It was deliberately crafted as what Min Seong Kim describes as an "empty signifier" or an inclusive and all-encompassing ideological vehicle that leaves rooms for diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations [5]. Hence, the multifaceted role of Pancasila transcends the secular-religious dichotomy, manifesting in the political realm as both authoritarian and democratic, and in the cultural domain as a defender of Indonesia's indigenous cultural values. The elasticity encourages the negotiations and advancements of diverse religious, political, and cultural agendas in the name of Pancasila without contradicting the ideology's unifying principles as the foundation of the state. In doing so, it facilitates the formation of imagined communities, through which divergent views and interests are represented, reconciled, and justified by the Pancasila state. The imagination is both singular and plural. While groups such as secular nationalists, conservative Muslims, New Order elites, democrats, and Javanists build solidarity within their respective, self-contained communities, they collectively submit and willingly adhere to a unified and sovereign Indonesian nationhood, where different voices are acknowledged and accommodated.

The role of Pancasila in maintaining unity amid the diversity of forces at play could be best understood through an analysis of the religious, political, and cultural tensions it navigates. Since the founding of the Indonesian nation-state, Pancasila, as an "empty signifier," has been skillfully interpreted and employed to serve and advance often divergent and competing interests of sub-state groups. These dynamics are best captured by three key dyads and faces of Pancasila, namely secularization versus religionization (the religious face), consolidation of authoritarian political control and democratization (the political face), and lastly, the dichotomy of indigenous and western values (the cultural face).

This paper proceeds in the following structure. Section 2 outlines the analytical framework used to examine Pancasila's multifaceted role. Section 3 provides a historical overview of Pancasila, tracing its rise, decline, and revival as Indonesia's ideological foundation. Section 4 presents a substantive analysis of the different faces of Pancasila or how it has been mobilized in facilitating both secularization and religionization in the religious sphere, legitimizing authoritarian control while enabling democratic transitions in the political domain, and defending indigenous traditions against the encroaching Western values. Finally, Section 5 concludes with a summary of Pancasila's contributions to Indonesia's enduring unity in diversity, highlighting its role in facilitating the formation of imagined communities across the nation.

2. Analytical framework

This paper employs a qualitative research method, reviewing and synthesizing scholarly works that examine the role of Pancasila in Indonesian politics, state-religion relations, society, and cultural traditions. The timeframe of this paper spans the Soekarno and Soeharto eras and the later democratization. Through a dyadic analysis, this study highlights how Pancasila's nature as an "empty signifier" allows it to be mobilized to advance competing agendas and diverse objectives on the religious, political, and cultural spectrums, respectively.

This paper draws on Benedict Anderson's imagined community thesis to unpack the nuances inherent in Pancasila's different roles across religious, political, and cultural domains. His conceptualization of the socially constructed "imagined communities"

rests on four interconnected and mutually constitutive ideas. First, as the phrase suggests, communities or human associations in general are imagined. Members of the community perceive themselves as part of a shared community, even if they will never know or meet most others. Second, "imagined communities" are inherently limited. The boundaries of communities are well-defined and self-contained, beyond which other nations and communities exist. The limited nature of imagined communities enables members define the "selves" with "others." Third, sovereignty and legitimacy derive internally from the members of communities or nations, which replaces the authority rested in the Church and dynastic empires in the pre-modern era. Fourth, nations are imagined as communities where members are bound together by a common cause, a shared identity, and the resulting sense of fraternity, which, in Anderson's words drives "so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imagining [10]." Following an overview of the historical evolution of the unifying concept, I will examine, through a dyadic analysis, how Pancasila has been mobilized to shape the "imagined communities" underpinned by the above core attributes.

3. Historical evolution of Pancasila

3.1. Soekarno's rule (1945–1967): the birth and consolidation of Pancasila

Debates over Pancasila as the guiding principle for state-religion relations began as early as the Japanese occupation, facilitated by the Japanese military administration (Gunseikanbu). Opinions are divided between Islamic and secular nationalist leaders on "the basis of the state or the position of religion in the state [4]." The Islamist group pushed back the idea of a secular regime underpinned by the separation of state and religion suggested by both the nationalist group and the Japanese authority, voicing opposition that any form of secularism is "anti-religion" and anti-Islam [8]. To break the stalemate, on June 1, 1945, Soekarno proposed what is considered the first conceptualization of Pancasila as the philosophical basis of the state comprising of indonesian nationalism, internationalism or humanitarianism, deliberation or democracy, social welfare, and belief in God [4].

The fifth pillar, as an attempt by nationalists to reconcile Islamic aspirations with the "religious-neutral" Pancasila state, was, however, not well received by the Islamists. Hence, the first iteration of Pancasila prompted heated debates and negotiations, which culminated in a compromising reformulation of the concept as: belief in God with the obligation to carry out the Islamic shari'ah for its believers, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom in unanimity arising from deliberation amongst representatives, and social justice for all the people of Indonesia [4].

This second iteration became what is known as the Jakarta Charter, which was initially intended to serve as the preamble to the country's new Constitution. The most consequential modification was the key phrase of "with the obligation to carry out the Islamic shari'ah for its believers" (dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya), which later came to be referred to as the "seven words," which has been a consistent theme in the evolution of Pancasila on the relationship between the state and religion [1,6,11].

The "seven words" were, however, retracted in the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 upon proclaiming national independence due to threats of succession from the Christian groups in eastern Indonesia. Further debates over Constitutions and Pancasila emerged in the Constituent Assembly between 1956 and 1959, where it was challenged by competing visions of the Indonesian state's foundation, namely a secular regime based on "freedom of religion and belief," an Islamic state, and the Pancasila state as a compromise and the middle ground [1]. These conflicting visions led to a deadlock in the Assembly, as none of the groups secured the required two-thirds majority to resolve the issue. In response to the impasse, Soekarno dissolved the parliament and issued a presidential decree in July 1959 reinstating Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution reaffirming the Jakarta Charter as the "spirit and the inseparable part of the Constitution, which effectively established Pancasila as the foundation of the Indonesian nation-state [4]."

3.2. The New Order regime (1967–1998): institutionalization and legalization of Pancasila

Following Soekarno's establishment and consolidation of the Pancasila state, Soeharto's New Order regime marked a further elevation and expansion of Pancasila enabled by sweeping institutionalization and legalization. Soeharto rose to power in 1965 following the purge of Indonesian communists and positioned himself as the "protector of Pancasila" against perceived threats from communism and radical Islam [12].

A notable move under Soeharto was institutionalization of Pancasila as the "sole basis" (asas tunggal) for all political, social, and cultural organizations [13]. Unlike the Soekarno era consolidation of the state ideology through debates and negotiations by different parties and groups concerned, Soeharto took a more strong-handed approach of top-down implementation. This process took three steps. First, Pancasila was closely associated with the New Order regime in its genesis. According to Soeharto, the "New Order" is defined as "the whole body of order, arrangement, system and outlook on life of the Indonesian People, Nation and State, which is reinstated in the pure implementation of the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution [11]."

Second, the official and the only legitimate interpretation of Pancasila was developed following the enactment of "the Guidelines for Understanding and Practices of Pancasila (P4)" in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in 1978 [9]. The P4 legislation explicated and formalized 36 behavioural norms pertaining to the "practice" of Pancasila endorsed by the New Order regime [9]. The issuance of P4 was followed by the 1979 establishment of a complementary Educational Development Agency for the Implementation P4 (BP-7) charged with "administering Pancasila courses" across national, regional, and local levels [7]. Following the institutionalization, P4 was then integrated with and added substance to the moral education campaign of the regime, which was outlined in the 1973 General Principles of National Policies (GBHN) enacted by the MPR [7]. According to GBHN, the curriculum was required to include Pancasila moral education and emphasized instilling the "spirit and values" of the 1945 Constitution and the 36 Pancasila behavioural norms, in both public and private settings [7, 12]. In the 1975 curriculum revision, two hours per week were specifically allocated to Pancasila moral education at all educational stages, from elementary to higher education. In addition to its incorporation into the educational curricula, passing P4 training was made mandatory for all civil servants before they could assume positions within the government [7].

The third and perhaps most profound step that effectively entrenched Pancasila as the "sole basis" under the New Order Regime was the 1985 legislation of Law on Mass Organization. The law required all mass organizations, including political parties, religious groups, cultural associations, and other civil society entities, to explicitly adopt Pancasila as their "sole ideological foundation [4, 12]. Organizations' implementation of the provision was then subject to stringent government regulation and monitoring to ensure compliance with Pancasila and the regime's official interpretation of the ideology [7].

As a result, the close association of Pancasila with the New Order regime, the establishment of its official interpretation, and the enactment of the Law on Mass Organizations significantly expanded Pancasila's role. It evolved from being the foundation of the state to becoming the "sole basis" for all forms of organizations, which marks the high point of Pancasila's prominence in Indonesia's post-independence history [5].

3.3. Reformasi and democratic transition (1998–present): the decline and revival of Pancasila

The fall of Soeharto in 1998 ushered in an era of democratic reform, which prompted a re-evaluation of Pancasila's role in Indonesian society. The course of Pancasila implementation was reversed due to its authoritarian connotations associated with the New Order era policies [3]. The P4 training or the Pancasila indoctrination alongside the BP-7 education agency was soon abolished by the MPR's decision in 1999 [3]. Although the Law on Mass Organizations, a major Soeharto era legacy, remained intact, its enforcement was to be discontinued. In the absence of the strong-handed promotion of Pancasila as the "sole basis" of mass organizations, religious, political, and cultural entities soon returned to their original ideological foundations, with the sole exception of communism, which is still met with official scrutiny and suppression [4]. Nevertheless, despite the swift dismantling of Soeharto era Pancasila legacies, organizations and entities still largely uphold the principle of Pancasila as the basis of the state, reflecting the staying power and a "national consensus" on Pancasila as the underlying state ideology [9].

Meanwhile, amid Indonesia's turbulent post-Reformasi political dynamics, Pancasila underwent a two-sided revival, driven by both liberalizing forces and a rollback of authoritarian social controls. On one hand, the relaxation of the Soeharto-era state's monopoly on the official interpretation of Pancasila allowed for its democratization, re-opening space for diverse groups and entities to engage in debates and interpret Pancasila's substantive meaning in both public and private spheres [5]. The National Education Law of 2003 integrated it into the goals of education to foster pluralism [9]. Debates in the public sphere at the MPR between the secular and religious parties and groups lead scholars to identify a liberalizing tendency of Pancasila democracy. On the flip side, President Joko Widodo's 2017 amendment of the Law on Mass Organizations reasserted Pancasila as the foundational ideology of all organizations, leading to concerns about the return to Soeharto-era social control [14]. Likewise, unfiltered influences of "global ideologies" introduced post-reformasi have instilled fear among elite circles of losing ideological unity and waning national characters and Indonesian cultural values [15]. This, in turn, propelled reinvigorated interests in defending the national ideology, which culminated in the establishment of the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP) in 2018 and the resumption of mandatory Pancasila curricula [12].

Renewed interest in and popularity of the state ideology is also evident in symbolic initiatives like the declaration of June 1 as Pancasila Day in 2016, signalling the inseparable role and relevance of Pancasila to Indonesian national identity and unity across time and turbulent transitions.

4. A dyadic analysis of Pancasila's role in building imagined communities

4.1. The religious face of Pancasila

Pancasila serves as a unique ideological framework that facilitates both religionization and secularization, processes that operate in tandem rather than in separation. These two dynamics can be seen as two sides of the same coin, where the Pancasila state tolerates and works with religious and secular elements in their mild forms while avoiding the extreme variants. On one hand, it

prevents the establishment of an outright Islamic state or caliphate, ensuring that Indonesia does not become a theocratic state [4]. On the other hand, it also refrains from enforcing a complete separation between state and religion, as seen in the strictly secular model of Türkiye [4]. Instead, Pancasila provides a middle ground, where the state maintains a delicate balance and stewardship of religion providing a buffer against radicalizing forces that drive politics to the two ends of the religious spectrum, thereby maintaining unity in diversity.

4.1.1. Secularization

Whether the secular or religious face of Pancasila played a more dominant role has long been the subject of intense debate. The ideological breadth and depth of the five principles allowed for the employment of Pancasila to advance diverse secularization processes in ideological, political, and economic domains. A closer examination of the first principle, "Belief in One Almighty God," reveals that even the most ostensibly religious aspect of Pancasila is deeply intertwined with nationalist considerations and secular undertones, reflecting the intentions of the nationalist founding fathers at the inception of the Indonesian nation-state. As Ichwan suggests, Pancasila functioned primarily as a secular ideology with a minimal degree of religionization from the Soekarno to Soeharto period (until 1990) [4]. Three factors and processes lead to this characterization of Pancasila's use cases.

First, the adoption if Pancasila as the Indonesian state ideology and the founding of a "religious-neutral" Pancasila state underpinned by the relative separation of state and religion marked a triumph of "mild secularism" over radicalizing tendencies of the Islamist factions [3]. The decision to not legalize the second iteration of Pancasila (the Jakarta Charter), which included a clause obligating the state to enforce Islamic shari'ah for its believers (seven words), effectively prevented the religious capture of the state by its Muslim majority [4]. The continued omission of the "seven words" from Indonesia's Constitution alike has established the ideological foundation of the state, shaping the future development and application of Pancasila along secular lines.

Second, Pancasila as the state ideology has been deeply intertwined and associated with modernization and developmental nationalism during both the Soekarno era. It both inspired and served to justify large-scale state-led development programs under the overarching framework of "Pancasila economics." Soekarno's vision of pembangunan (development) was deeply tied to Pancasila, particularly its principle of unity and independence from foreign domination [2]. Consequently, development projects like telecommunications systems, infrastructure, and industrial facilities were framed as expressions of nationalist pride and efforts to achieve self-sufficiency (berdikari) [2]. Likewise, Pancasila inspired large-scale symbolic "lighthouse projects," such as stadiums and monuments, to showcase Indonesia's capacity for modernization, fostering a sense of national identity and unity [2].

Third, the mandatory requirement to adopt Pancasila as the "sole basis" of all organizations and entities during the Soeharto era further undercut the religious base of Indonesian politics and society and enhanced the religious-neutral stance of the regime. This was reinforced by Soeharto's systematic depoliticization of religions and crack down on radical Islamist factions by bureaucratizing and institutionalizing the state ideology. The regime set up the P4 training and BP-7 and co-opted the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to moderate Islam by promoting the official interpretation of Pancasila. Popular demand to incorporate the "seven words" into Pancasila was denounced by Soeharto as religious terrorism [4, 16]. Islamist parties, such as Masyumi, accused of harboring radical tendencies, along with movements advocating for the establishment of an Islamic state, were banned under the pretext of "defending Pancasila [6]." Radical Islamic groups, such as Darul Islam, were dismantled through military action and surveillance, while religious activities were confined to cultural and personal domains marking a "low point in Muslim-government relations" during Soeharto's rule [3, 4].

4.1.2. Religionization

The unique institutional and ideological set-up of Indonesia's "Pancasila state with a Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA)" allows for religionization to happen in parallel with the state-led secularization processes [4]. As a compromising ideology at its outset, Pancasila leaves interpretative space for religions where the first principle explicitly acknowledges belief in a one God, establishing a connection between religion and state ideology and state's obligations to protect religion. While it does not prescribe a particular religion, it provides a banner under which contention for greater religious influence in public life could be discussed and negotiated in the public sphere.

A clear example of this is the repeated attempts by Islamist factions to legalize the Jakarta Charter, which mandates the state's "obligation to implement Islamic shari'ah for its believers" and was described by Soekarno as the "spirit and an inseparable part of the Indonesian Constitution [4]." Although Islamist efforts in this regard, driven by groups such as Masyumi in the MPR in the 1950s and constitutional reforms between 1999 and 2002 ultimately failed, they underscored the continued attempts by Islamist factions to religionize and Islamize the state [17]. The repeated advocacy for incorporating Islamic principles into the state structure heightened the prominence of Islamic identity in political discourse [17].

Additionally, Pancasila is both religious-inclusive and exclusionary. On one hand, the belief in one God renders the state a staunch opponent of atheism, anti-religious secularism, communism, and to a certain extent, polytheism [5]. On the other hand,

the establishment and development of the MORA resulted in a state-regulated religionization process, in which only globally recognized and ideally monotheistic religions, such as Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism were granted a dedicated division within the MORA allowing them access to government funding [5].

Moreover, Pancasila's principle of belief in one God led to the rollout of mandatory inclusion of religious education in the national curriculum overseen in collaboration between the MORA and the Ministry of Education. By the 2003 National Education System Bill, religious instruction was required for students and had to be conducted by teachers of the same religion [9, 14]. Most notable among these religious education curricula was Islam, not due to its exceptionalism but rather because of the country's Muslim majority, which granted Islamic education a unique position in Indonesia.

A broader process of religionization unfolded during the final decade of Soeharto's rule and continued into the period of reformasi and democratization. While Soeharto's religionization efforts were largely a politically expedient move to sustain support from Islamic groups, they laid the groundwork for the subsequent sweeping Islamization that permeated both government policies and grassroots movements. Between 1990 and 1998, Soeharto's government supported various Islamization initiatives, including the establishment of the All-Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association (ICMI) in 1990, the creation of Indonesia's first Islamic bank, Bank Muamalat, and the 1991 Presidential Instruction on the Compilation of Islamic Laws, which introduced Islamic family laws for use in Religious Courts [4, 18].

In the post-New Order era (1998 onwards), following the relaxation of Pancasila as the "sole basis" regulation, religious organizations soon returned to their original ideological foundation while not overtly rejecting Pancasila's guiding role. Legislation inspired by Islamic teachings was introduced, including regulations on sharia banking, zakat (tithes), Hajj services, sharia governance in Aceh, and a ban on pornography. The political decentralization associated with the reformasi enabled the enactment of over 30 sharia-inspired bylaws in provinces and localities, particularly in regions with histories of Islamist rebellion or strong Islamic sentiments, such as Aceh, West Java, and South Sulawesi [4].

Despite this "conservative turn" in Indonesian Islam and politics, religionization was advanced in the name of Pancasila, justified by the first principle of belief in one God and the "seven words" enshrined in the Jakarta Charter [17]. Viewed alongside the simultaneous secularization process under the banner of Pancasila, it becomes evident that Pancasila was not only compatible with both ends of the religious spectrum but also played an active role in shaping the self-contained and imagined communities of secular nationalists and conservative Islamist elements within Indonesian society.

4.2. The political face of Pancasila

Similar to the religious dyad of secularization and religionization, Pancasila's political use cases as both authoritarian means of sociopolitical control and justification for democracy are also evolving in parallel.

4.2.1. Authoritarian political control

As discussed in the earlier sections, following Soekarno's consolidation of Pancasila as Indonesia's state ideology, Soeharto took one step further elevating Pancasila as an inviolable and uncontested ideology governing all walks of Indonesian life. This is, in turn, achieved by 1) monopolizing the official interpretation of Pancasila underpinned by P4, 2) implementation of Pancasila ideological indoctrination in both education and civil service system overseen by BP-7, and 3) the legislation of Law on Mass Organizations. Likewise, enforcing Pancasila as the sole basis of organizations served to advance secularization by undercutting radical Islamist organizations' ideological foundation.

Nevertheless, the significance of maintaining ideological conformity by entrenching Pancasila extends beyond regulating the state-religion relationship. It has an often-overlooked political dimension, where the official Pancasila dogma served as an oppressive apparatus of authoritarian social and political control. The 1963 Anti-Subversion Law, combined with the sacralization of Pancasila and the resulting ideological apparatus, was skillfully used by Soeharto as a means to suppress political dissents and oppositions [14]. Article 1 of the Law makes explicit reference to Pancasila that subversion is defined as acts that "destroy, damage, or deviate from the Pancasila state ideology or the Broad Guidelines of State Policy (GBHN)." This lent the regime an effective pretext and legal tool to criminalize any form of political dissent as "anti-Pancasila [14]."

The Anti-Subversion Law during the New Order regime was first invoked upon cracking down on the communist movements in 1965, which was accused of attempting to "destroy and replace Pancasila as the sole state ideology [14]." This served to outlaw and purge communist elements on a legal basis and consolidate Soeharto's rule [5]. In similar vein, there were cases where the courts convicted separatists of subversion for undermining the third principle of Pancasila (the unity of Indonesia) even though they did not engage in any violent acts. Unsurprisingly, pro-democracy movements and affiliations, which were perhaps most detrimental to Soeharto's personal rule, were also subject to the Anti-Subversion Law where the Supreme Court convicted a group of students for the mundane act of voicing opposition to the regime's economic policy [14]. Here again, the Court ruled that students' accusations were "anti-Pancasila" for they were "so hardliner and radical as to cause hostility, division, and confusion among the people," which clearly ran contrary to the unity principle [14].

As introduced in earlier sections, the hallmark Soeharto-era Law on Mass Organization was not abolished outright during the reformasi, which remained intact until the 2013 and 2017 amendments [14]. Despite the substantial progress towards civil liberties since the fall of the New Order, Joko Widodo's 2017 amendment was perceived as a remanent and a continuation of the Soeharto authoritarianism, heavily criticized by human rights activists and NGOs [19]. While it abolished the "sole basis" regulation, the 2017 amended new Social Organization Law was widely perceived as intensifying restrictions and legal measures against organizations suspected of being anti-Pancasila. The law empowered the Interior Minister with a wide discretion to disband organizations and associations in violation of Pancasila [14]. Likewise, individuals affiliated with the accused organization might also face criminal penalties. The first case in which the law was invoked involved the dissolution of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, whose aspiration to establish a caliphate was deemed politically destabilizing and anti-Pancasila, highlighting how the national ideology has been used as a tool for sociopolitical control over time [19].

4.2.2. Pancasila democracy

Following the end of the New Order, Pancasila as an empty signifier was soon infused with yet another meaning and role tying it closely with the country's politics. The resulting synthetic political ideology was Pancasila Democracy. Similar to its role in the religious domain, Pancasila Democracy represents a clear departure from the "guided democracy" of the Soekarno and Soeharto eras [16]. However, as scholars have argued, it also differs from conventional liberal democratic values, once again occupying an ideological middle ground. Pancasila's fusion with democracy is both normative and positive in nature [20].

From a normative perspective, a substantial body of literature highlights the compatibility between the state ideology and democratic values and governance, leading to the conclusion that Pancasila should be revitalized to guide the country's democratization. For instance, the most often cited evidence of compatibility is the fourth principle on "democracy guided by inner wisdom in unanimity arising from deliberation amongst representatives." The fourth principle's emphasis on musyawarah (deliberation) and mufakat (consensus) provides a philosophical foundation for Indonesia's pluralistic parliamentary system, through which consensus is fostered through deliberation for the common good of Indonesians [21]. In this sense, Pancasila democracy is believed to be capable of fostering dialogues and debates among diverse political, cultural, and religious groups, ensuring inclusive participation in the public sphere. Likewise, the second principle of "just and civilized humanity," as a normative value has been used by activists and civil societies to advocate for civil liberties, human rights, and the protection of minority groups under Indonesia's democratic framework. Additionally, the country's deviation from liberal democracy is by design [20]. The ultimate goal and ideal of individual liberty are believed to be excessive and antithetical to Pancasila's philosophical and religious norms that entail a degree of state involvement in religious affairs.

Regarding the implementation of Pancasila Democracy, on the other hand, the political ideological face of Pancasila has enabled greater participation and representation of moderate Muslim democrats and civil associations by creating space and avenues for debates and negotiations. Following the Islamic turn towards the end of the New Order, the ICMI emerged as a prominent Islamic organization due to its moderate Islamic agenda and alignment with modernist goals of economic development, education, and social justice [4, 18]. ICMI's advancement while upholding Pancasila contributed to the rise of civil Islam and subtly instilled democratic ethos and pluralism into the ideological template of Pancasila, laying the groundwork for the post-reformasi Pancasila democracy [18]. The trend continued into the reformasi and Indonesia's democratization, marked by the proliferation and advancement of civil Islamic organizations. Pancasila was mobilized to entrench and justify greater religious and political pluralism in the public sphere. Political decentralization and the parliamentary system have contributed to increasing tolerance and greater inclusion of participation by moderate Islamic parties, organizations, and communities, despite ongoing scrutiny of those with radical Islamic tendencies [5, 20]. However, the representative democracy and the country Muslim majority inadvertently lead to exclusion of ethnic and religious communities, highlighting the limitation of Pancasila democracy underpinned by the religious clause of belief in one God [5].

Additionally, democratic values are also evident in the proliferation and democratization of the interpretation of the ideology itself. The relaxation of the New Order state monopoly in interpreting Pancasila has encouraged pluralistic interpretations and use cases of Pancasila for secular, religious, moral, and economic agendas. According to Kim, the advancement of Pancasila democracy has effectively challenged the previously uncontested and inviolable nature of the state ideology, revitalizing it with greater flexibility aligned with democratic forms of political and civil participation [5].

Pancasila's political face manifests itself in its capture by the state as an effective tool to suppress political dissents and oppositions, while its fusion with democratic governance and values has instilled greater civil, religious, and political participation and pluralism. The ideology's nature as an empty signifier and the enforcement and relaxation of its official interpterion enabled the mobilization of Pancasila for the two ends of the political spectrum.

4.3. The moral and cultural face of Pancasila

The moral and cultural dimensions of Pancasila, Indonesia's state ideology, are often downplayed if not overlooked by most Western scholars. However, these aspects are integral to Pancasila, which serves as a defining inspiration for the formation of

Indonesia's national identity and character [22]. In his landmark speech on June 1, 1945, which marked the birth of Pancasila, Soekarno emphasized that the five proposed principles were not newly invented. Instead, they reflect the inherent values that derive from and have long existed within Indonesia's traditions, culture, and way of life [4]. Pancasila with its moral and cultural underpinnings have important implications for the formation and evolution of the imagined Indonesian nationhood and how the Indonesian "self" is defined against the foreign "others."

4.3.1. Perceived threats to the national identity and character

Three and a half centuries of interruptions by the colonial powers have defined Indonesian nationalist leaders' quest for colonial liberation and national unity and their reservation towards western influence in the cultural and moral realms. While the forces of capitalism, modernization, and western influence, as embodied in the western-educated nationalists, played an important role upon the founding of the modern nation-state, Indonesian people have generally remained insensitive to the spiritual culture of the west, striving instead to maintain a self-contained Indonesian cultural core [23].

Globalization and the permeation of western ideologies and values have instilled a great sense of insecurity in both society and the state. The perceived threats are both endogenous and exogenous. On one hand, scholars have lamented the decline in patriotism and recognition of Indonesia's national identity among the young generation following the penetration of media and technology [24]. The recurrence of religious violence, radicalism, and intolerance has undermined the national unity under Pancasila [25]. On the other hand, there is a substantial body of literature written by Indonesian scholars highlighting and lamenting the prevailing "moral degradation" on Islamic grounds due to the influence of western values and lifestyles [15, 22, 24, 25]. For instance, Sari and Andoyo problematize the millennial generation's western dressing style and the tendencies to normalize same-sex relationships and LGBT identities in the name of human rights [22]. Likewise, Mukaromah analyzes how the unfiltered influence of "global ideologies" might risk undermining "the national ideology" of Pancasila [15]. Kim, in a similar vein, warns against the morally undesirable "American values," and cultural imperialism such as "egotistic hedonism, materialism and superficial entertainment, radical individualism, depersonalization, pragmatic and reactive policies (secularist), and the marketization of education," which contradicts multiple principles of Pancasila [5].

The Indonesian state and leaders alike have voiced similar concerns and reservations about encroaching western values and norms. For instance, both New Order and post-reformasi Indonesian regimes have rejected the imposition of human rights by western standards, preferring the definition that better fits Indonesia's sociocultural context [14]. Likewise, unchecked individualism in both the social and political spheres, where popular demands for greater liberties and human rights are expressed, is considered destabilizing and contrary to Pancasila values [25]. Additionally, from the political standpoint, both unmodified western liberalism and communism are deemed antithetical to Indonesia's Pancasila democracy for the resulting destabilizing impacts in the social and religious domains [20]. Jointly, these concerns have resulted in a sense of urgency to filter if not ward off the encroaching western influence in the cultural and moral domain, which undermines social cohesion and national unity.

4.3.2. Pancasila and the national culture, traditions, and values

Pancasila has served as the defender or the means of preservation of Indonesian culture, traditions, and in both its origin and applications. The inspiration and development of Pancasila are deeply rooted in Javanese communitarian tradition and ethos. According to Darmaputera, Pancasila is developed and implemented in a society structured on "a state-village community axis with a very thin and weak layer in between [23]." This results in a state ideology that has a subtle connotation and emphasis on communal bonds, interconnectedness of individuals within society, and collective good, through which peace and harmony could be maintained [23]. Hence, imbued with this communitarian ethos, Pancasila has been mobilized by the Javanese leaders and groups to defend the national culture, traditions, and values in the face of foreign influence [5].

The most direct implication of Pancasila's communitarian origin and ethos is its antithetical attitude towards unchecked western individualism [25]. From a cultural perspective, the pursuit of individual liberties at the expense of collective good undermines the implicit social convention, which leads to the state's tolerance of moderate Islamic norms and the emphasis on Pancasila civic education [22]. It also results in a political culture of musyawarah (deliberation) and mufakat (consensus) as manifested in Pancasila democracy where decision making prioritizes social stability, harmony, and a delicate religious balance [21]. This, to a certain extent, was used by the national leaders to justify the seemingly oppressive actions by western standard and marks a clean break from liberal democracy, where the freedom of religion and speech are seen as inalienable rights of individuals [5]. In similar vein, the communitarian understanding of rights prompted Indonesia's participation in the 1993 Bangkok Declaration of Human Rights, in which Asian countries collectively refuted the western-dominated human rights discourse by formulating their own, referencing the distinctive "Asian values" and sociopolitical context [14].

Additionally, as Hefner suggests, Pancasila's origin in the indigenous Javanese cultural values and traditions and its subsequent applications render Indonesian nationalist leaders such as Soekarno and Soeharto staunch supporters of "Javanist mysticism" and Indonesian nationalism [18]. For instance, both Soekarno and Soeharto have emphasized Pancasila's indigeneity

and portrayed it as a "discovery" of Indonesian people's inner wisdom rather than an imposition or import of foreign ideals [4]. It also contributes to "Javanese exceptionalism," which is evident in Soekarno's Pancasila-inspired economic doctrine of self-sufficiency, insistence on Pancasila democracy as a superior form of democratic governance, Prabowo's rejection of new liberal capitalism in favour of "Pancasila economy" underpinned by social justice, and, last but not least, the systematic promotion of Pancasila through education and legal apparatus [2, 5, 20]. Pancasila's cultural face manifests itself both in its origin in Javanese cultural traditions and values and its subsequent applications to combat the perceived threats to Indonesia's cultural and moral core.

5. Conclusion

Formed concurrently with the modern interdependent Indonesian nation-state in 1945, Pancasila has served as Indonesia's state ideology and the guiding principles of the country's state-religion relationship, politics, and society. Its position and prominence varied over time, rising during the authoritarian eras, experiencing a decline during reformasi, and was revitalized soon after. Under Soekarno (1945–1967), it emerged as a compromise ideology to reconcile tensions between secular nationalists and Islamists, solidifying its role as the ideological foundation of the state. During Soeharto's New Order regime (1967–1998), Pancasila was elevated and institutionalized as the "sole ideological basis," serving as a tool for state control through mandatory education and strict regulation of organizations. In the Reformasi era (post-1998), Pancasila underwent a revival, with democratization enabling diverse interpretations, while concerns over globalization and ideological unity prompted renewed interest in reinforcing it. Today, Pancasila remains a symbol of Indonesia's unity, balancing pluralism with efforts to maintain national cohesion and cultural values.

The nature of Pancasila as an "empty signifier" and an inclusive, all-encompassing ideological vehicle allows for the mobilization of Pancasila for diverse and sometimes competing religious, political, and cultural agendas while maintaining its role as the unifying foundation of the state. This flexibility enables the creation of imagined communities where divergent views and interests are represented, reconciled, and justified within the framework of the Pancasila state. The imagination is both plural and singular. Sub-state imagined communities are formed, united and organized by a shared cause and ideology from within.

First, for nationalists united by secularism, Pancasila advanced their interests by establishing a "religious-neutral" state ideology that emphasized modernization, economic development, and relative separation of religion from the state, particularly through the rejection of the Jakarta Charter's "seven words" and the institutionalization of Pancasila as the sole ideological basis during Soeharto's regime. Second, for moderate Islamic groups, Pancasila allowed them to pursue their agenda through its first principle, "Belief in One God," which connected religion with state ideology and facilitated state-regulated religionization, including mandatory religious education, sharia-inspired regulations, and initiatives like the establishment of Islamic banks and Islamic family law courts. Third, Pancasila has served to advance the interests of Muslim democrats by providing a framework that integrates democratic values with moderate Islamic goals, fostering greater participation and representation of civil Islamic organizations. Post-New Order, Pancasila's emphasis on deliberation (musyawarah) and consensus (mufakat) has legitimized political pluralism, enabling them to pursue interests in alignment with modernist priorities like economic development, education, and social justice. Last but not least, Pancasila advances Javanists' interests by embedding and promoting Javanese communitarian traditions and values, such as harmony, interconnectedness, and consensus into the national ideology. This has allowed Javanese leaders and communities to mobilize Pancasila in defence of Indonesian culture, traditions, and the communitarian ethos against Western individualism and threats to the Javanese identity.

Nevertheless, the self-contained sub-state imagined communities of the secular nationalists, moderate Islamists, Muslim democrats, and Javinists all willingly submit to the ultimate imagined Indonesian nation-state, contributing to the resilience of Indonesia's unity in diversity underpinned by Pancasila.

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